

London, British Library, MS Royal 8 G. vii [Brussels/Mechelen, c.1513–25] (GB-Lbl)  
Berg & Neuber, *Tertia pars magni operis musici* ... [Nürnberg, 1559] (RISM 1559/2)

**SUPERIUS**  
Ab - sa - lon fi - li mi,

**CONTRATENOR**  
Ab - - sa - lon

**TENOR**  
Ab - -

**BASSUS**

5  
fi - li mi Ab - - sa - - lon,

fi - li mi, fi - li mi, fi -

8 sa - lon fi - li mi, fi - - li mi Ab - -

Ab - sa - lon fi - li mi,

11  
- fi - li mi Ab - sa - lon,

li mi Ab - sa - lon, Ab - sa - lon fi - li

sa - lon, fi - li mi Ab - sa - lon,

fi - li mi Ab - sa - lon, Ab -

17

li mi Ab - sa - lon, Ab - sa - lon  
 mi, Ab - sa - lon fi -  
 Ab - sa - lon fi - li mi, (Ab - sa - lon,) fi - li mi  
 sa - lon fi - li mi, Ab - sa - lon,

23

fi - li mi, (Ab - sa - lon,)  
 li mi, (Ab - sa - lon,) fi - li mi (Ab - sa -  
 Ab - sa - lon,  
 fi - li mi Ab - sa - lon, Ab - sa - lon,

28

(Ab - sa - lon) fi - li mi, Ab - sa - lon, (Ab - sa -  
 lon,) Ab - sa - lon fi - li mi, (Ab -  
 (Ab - sa - lon,) Ab - sa - lon fi - li mi, Ab -  
 sa - lon, Ab - sa - lon, Ab - sa - lon,

33

lon, Ab - sa - lon,) - sa - lon,) fi - li mi,  
 sa - lon (fi - li mi,) Ab - sa - lon  
 fi - li mi,

37

quis det ut mo - ri - ar pro te,  
 Ab - sa - lon, quis det ut mo - ri -  
 sa - lon fi - li mi, quis det  
 quis det ut mo - ri - ar pro te, ut

42

(ut mo - ri - ar) pro te,  
 ar pro te, pro  
 ut mo - ri - ar pro  
 mo - ri - ar pro te,

46

fi - li mi Ab - sa - lon,  
 te, fi - li mi Ab - sa - lon, non  
 te, fi - li mi Ab - sa - lon, non vi -  
 fi - li mi Ab - sa - lon,

51

non vi - vam ul - tra,  
 vi - vam (ul - tra,) ul - tra,  
 - vam ul - tra, ul - tra,  
 non vi - vam ul - tra,

† Contratenor, m.53.3: marked with a ♭ sign in RISM 1559/2 (likewise m.70.3).

56

non vi - vam ul - - - tra, sed  
 non vi - vam ul - - - tra,  
 non vi - vam ul - - - tra, sed de -  
 tra, ul - - - tra,

61

de - scen - dam in in - fer - num plo -  
 sed de - scen - dam in in - fer -  
 - scen - dam in in - fer - num, in - fer -  
 sed de - scen - dam in in - fer - num

66

- - - rans, non vi - vam  
 num plo - - - rans, non vi - vam ul -  
 num (plo - - - rans, ) non vi - vam  
 plo - - - rans, non vi - vam

71

ul - - - tra, non vi - vam ul - - -  
 tra, non vi - vam ul - - -  
 ul - - - tra, (non vi - vam) ul - - -  
 ul - - - tra, ul - - -

† *Superius, Contratenor*, m.65: explicitly marked with a ♭ sign in RISM 1559/2 only (likewise m.82).

76

tra, sed de - scen - dam in in -  
 tra, sed de - scen - dam  
 tra, sed de - scen - dam in in - fer -  
 tra, sed de - scen - dam in

81

fer - num plo - rans.  
 in in - fer - num plo - rans.  
 num plo - rans.  
 in - fer - num plo - rans.

Ábsalon fili mi,  
 quis det ut móriar pro te,  
 fili mi, Ábsalon?  
 Non vivam ultra,  
 sed descéndam in inférnum plorans.

*Absalom, my son,  
 would that I had died instead of you,  
 my son, Absalom!  
 I shall live no more,  
 but go down into hell, weeping.*

from 2 Samuel 18:33, Job 7:16, and Genesis 37:35

Though this motet has long been attributed to Josquin, recent scholarship has suggested its authorship more appropriately belongs to his Franco-Flemish contemporary, Pierre de la Rue. This setting of David's lament certainly bears the hallmarks of Josquin's supreme mastery of counterpoint and imitation. The most striking example of this is surely the vivid word painting of the final phrase, descending 'to hell' through the circle of fifths as far as D $\flat$  and G $\flat$ , at the notated pitch of the earliest surviving source (a manuscript held in the British Library and believed to have been copied by the Netherlands court scribe, Petrus Alamire). The use of five flats is highly unusual in early 16th-century polyphony. The very low vocal range — necessitating the use of the very rare F5 clef in the *Bassus* voice — is similarly unusual, though not so uncommon among early-16th century works with a theme of lamentation or mourning. In stark contrast, Berg & Neuber's 1559 print is set a ninth(!) higher, presenting the *Superius* voice in the equally rare G1 clef.

**Editorial Notes:**

This edition is set a fourth lower than the notated pitch of the RISM 1559/2 source (or a major sixth higher than that of the GB-Lbl source). For ease of reading, and to avoid a partial signature containing one sharp in the upper voices and one flat in the *Bassus* voice, the common signature of the 1559 source (as indicated in the incipits) has been adopted in preference to the partial signature of the GB-Lbl source. Editorial accidentals are indicated above the note, with precautionary accidentals in parenthesis. Original note values are retained: thus, consistent with 16th-century convention, the  $\text{C}$  mensuration sign and its modern-equivalent  $\text{C}$  time signature signify a semibreve tactus. Bar lines are added only to aid reading and direction: 'strong' and 'weak' beats implied by their position should never take precedence over phrasing or word stress. Ligatures and coloration in the source are acknowledged with overarching square brackets and open 'corner' brackets respectively. Word underlay is selectively adapted from both sources without acknowledgement, along with associated minor variation in rhythm and note values. Re-iterated text implied by an 'ij' marking or incomplete phrase in the original is indicated in *italic*; editorial re-iteration appears in { brackets }.